

Sierra Club News Release

For release: Monday, December 2, 2002

For More Information

Rita Beving, Dallas Sierra Club, 214.373.3808 or 972.406-9667

Erin Rogers, Lone Star Chapter, 512.477.1729 or 512.663.4008 (cell)

Fred Richardson, Sierra Communications, 512.477.1729

East Texas Water Planning Group Set to Pull the Plug on Marvin Nichols Dam & Reservoir Proposal **Time for DFW Water Planning Group to Do the Same**

AUSTIN—The state water planning group for Northeast Texas is set to pull the plug on the proposed Marvin Nichols Dam, which would flood thousands of acres of farms and prime bottomland forest along the Sulphur River. The dam would be built to supply surplus water to fuel development in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. It has been bitterly opposed by residents of the Sulphur River valley who would lose their family homesteads.

"Loggers and ranchers and farmers and tree huggers got together to stop this," said Rita Beving of the Sierra Club. "We still have a stiff fight on our hands with Dallas and the State Water Board, but they're on notice now. The people of East Texas have said that they aren't going to let Dallas take their water without a fight."

The Region D water planning received 2500 letters from citizens who favored the amendment to strike the Marvin Nichols dam from the regional water plan. As of Wednesday, November 27 the group had received no letters in opposition to the amendment. The Marvin Nichols project is opposed by a broad coalition, including the Sierra Club and logging interests.

The Region D Water Planning Group will meet on Wednesday. The group is expected to approve an amendment that will remove the Marvin Nichols dam and reservoir proposal from the group's long-range water plan. The group is also expected to call for a study of the economic and environmental impacts of building the dam.

Opponents of the dam will still have to contend with the Texas Water Development Board, which seems intent on approving Marvin Nichols even in the face of overwhelming local opposition. The Region C water planning group, which covers the greater DFW area, also seems intent on forcing Marvin Nichols on the people of Northeast Texas.

"One of the basic principles of the state water planning process is that it will reflect local needs and local concerns," said Ken Kramer, Director of the Lone Star Chapter. "It goes against the democratic spirit of the process to shove a project like Marvin Nichols down the throats of people who don't their homes flooded."

If constructed, Marvin Nichols would flood 72,000 acres of prime forest in order to fuel an increase in water usage in Dallas over the next twenty years. The dam, which would be built on the Sulphur River in northeast Texas near DeKalb, would cost \$1.7 billion and leave hundreds of residents of the Sulphur River valley homeless.

The Region C Water Planning Group favors construction of the dam in order to make possible an increase in per capita water consumption in the DFW Metroplex over the next fifty years.

The City of Dallas projects a per capita water use of 264 gallons per day by 2050, almost twice the per capita use expected for San Antonio and over 90 gallons per capita per day more than anticipated for Houston.

In fact, Dallas is the only major Texas city to predict an increase in per capita water use over the next 50 years. Quite simply, the Marvin Nichols dam would be unnecessary if Dallas and surrounding cities focused on bringing their water use in line with more conservation-minded cities to the south.

"Our farm has been in the family for generations, but this dam would flood us out and force us off our property," said Shirley Schumake, a longtime resident of the Sulphur River valley. "We'd like a chance to explain to the citizens of Dallas the consequences of this project. I'm sure most people would be happy to do a little more to conserve water so that folks like us can stay in our homes."

A major shortcoming of the Region C plan is that it offers no realistic strategy for reducing water demand during a drought. Instead it assumes that peak human demands, like lawn watering, must be met during the worst drought, even if no water is left for fish and wildlife.

The same amount of water that would be supplied to the Metroplex from Marvin Nichols could be realized through conservation. For example, Dallas could take a more aggressive approach in its water pricing structure to encourage heavy users of residential water to scale back on their outdoor watering. The best pricing structures leave necessary water affordable while making excessive consumption a high-priced luxury.

If cities in the Metroplex decreased water use by 22%, which would still leave per capita use above all other major Texas cities, they still could grow as projected and there would be no need for new reservoir construction. San Antonio lowered its per capita water use rate 30% in 13 years.

The Marvin Nichols reservoir would flood 30,000 acres of high quality rare bottomland hardwood forest (vital habitat for game and non-game wildlife) and another 42,000 acres of other forests and family farms and ranches along the Sulphur River in Red River, Bowie, Franklin, Titus and Morris counties. Of the 619,100 acre-feet of water that the reservoir would yield annually, 80 percent would be piped roughly 130 miles to Dallas, Fort Worth, and other North Texas cities.

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